

## A brief history of Snape & the hamlet of Gromford

According to Ruth Irving, who wrote a brief history of Snape in 1948, Snape, Snapes or Snapys are three different ways of spelling the word which in Anglo Saxon language meant bog or marsh. This is quite surprising when one considers much of the higher area of the village is mainly poor-quality heathland.

Like all other villages in this region, historically, Snape has always been associated with agriculture or trades associated with it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the agricultural land was mainly associated with five farms and some smallholdings. Much of the land is now out to contract farming. There are no longer any milking herds in the village and pigs are the only livestock reared in any numbers



Although the Maltings complex sits in the parish of Tunstall, it has always been closely associated with Snape and forever known as Snape Maltings. The site of the Maltings was acquired by Newson Garrett in 1840 and he built the majority of the complex that stands today. The river Alde played a significant part in his business with sailing barges regularly transporting grain to and from the site.

With the closure of the Maltings in 1965, around 60 jobs were lost, and men had to find alternative employment such as moving to other maltings in Suffolk and Essex whilst others took up employment in manufacturing in Ipswich or at Richard Garrett Engineering Works at Leiston. Husband and wife team, Bob & Doris Ling became milk rounds persons and grave diggers. Later they became managers of Snape Maltings Concert Hall.

With the advent of the internationally recognised Concert Hall being born in part of the former Maltings building in 1967, the face of Snape changed considerably with visitors from across the World attending concerts. Later the addition of the shopping aspect of the complex brought/brings visitors throughout the year. The concert hall was the wish of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. In 1937 Benjamin Britten bought the former windmill at the top of Snape Hill and converted it into a dwelling where he lived for some time.

A Benedictine Priory was formed on the site now occupied by Abbey Farm which lies north west of Snape Bridge. The Priory was dissolved around the 1520s and no remains are to be found today. Abbey Farm is the home of a Medieval timber-framed barn which was Grade II\* listed in 1983.

Snape Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground is bisected by the A-1094 Road just west of the junction with Priory Road. The first formally recorded excavation was in 1862 by local landowner Septimus Davidson. During his research he came across a 14-metre burial ship in which was found a gold ring and a claw beaker, both are exhibited in the British Museum. Some smaller items are displayed in the Moot Hall at Aldeburgh. The importance of this find was eclipsed in 1939 by the discovery of the Sutton Hoo Anglo Saxon burials

Despite additional housing being constructed in the village during recent years, the population remains very close to 600, which has been the figure for a long time.

Snape is very fortunate in that it continues to have many assets, an excellent school and pre-school unit, village hall, snooker club, playing field, garage, combined service station and village store and two pubs plus one over the Bridge by Snape Maltings.

Social activity includes the following who all meet at the Golden Key: The Good Neighbour Scheme for the elderly, the Grumpy Old Men and The Royal British Legion. In addition, "Girls about Snape" meet at the village hall. Details of all these activities are published in the monthly Ebb & Flow magazine, the Alde River Benefice newsletter.

The Snape Good Neighbour Scheme has been a wonderful asset to many during the Covid 19 pandemic, with regular updates to all residents. Transport has been provided for those attending the local surgery or Ipswich Hospital and shopping expeditions. Those who have requested contact have been paired with a volunteer to ensure they are not forgotten. In addition, the School has operated a "Village Larder" offering free household goods, food and vegetables, all of which has been donated by generous local people.

Snape has a friendly supportive community, and it has been my home village for 83 years. I just hope you enjoy living here as much as I do.

Brian Boulton